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Harrisburg Academy Ventures into Online Instruction

Harrisburg, PA (March 26, 2020) – While the global COVID-19 health pandemic continues to evolve, Harrisburg Academy has remained committed to education continuity by developing an engaging and dynamic Distance Learning Plan (DLP) for its students. In the face of this unprecedented disruption of education, the Academy community has shown great resiliency, ingenuity, and positivity, while becoming a school district leader in providing true online instruction.

“I have been an educator now for just short of a half-century and an administrator for over a quarter of a century,” exclaims Harrisburg Academy’s Head of School Adrian Allan. “During this time, I cannot recall having to make so many hard calls in a single week than as we had to in March 2020.” The Academy’s administrative team started research on distance learning options in early March and referenced schools with developed distance learning plans that included clear and concise information and expectations for faculty, students, and families. A plan specific to Harrisburg Academy was crafted in accordance with the Academy’s Curriculum Committee’s guidelines, which took into account student scheduling, and with the support from the technology department who have been instrumental in supporting faculty with the transition to online classrooms. Faculty took the initiative early on and practiced on these virtual learning platforms with students before the campus had officially closed its doors under a state-mandated order by Governor Wolf.

Communication and connectivity have been key for Academy teachers, students, and families during the implementation of distance learning. Teachers continue to check-in with families and students regularly and provide direct instruction, video lessons, and independent learning activities that vary based on division. The Academy has worked to support students during this transition by maintaining the same expectations for them in a typical classroom— the expectation to treat everyone with respect and kindness, and to be one’s best self while learning together.

As the school works to find balance in the newly implemented distance learning experience, feedback has so far been positive. Students are excited to connect with teachers and classmates, and families have appreciated the school’s efforts to continue with teaching and learning during an unprecedented situation. “One thing I can say for sure is how amazing our Harrisburg Academy community has been through it all,” states Lauren Grace, an Academy parent. “We are super impressed with the smooth transition to distance-learning. The teachers have all been positive and helpful in making our children and parents feel comfortable as well.”

Harrisburg Academy expects to face challenges while venturing into this uncharted territory, but continues to look for opportunities to get feedback from students and families on their experiences through surveys and check-ins. Additionally, the Academy is working on a community initiative that opens up our Distance Learning Plan to all students in the area. Harrisburg Academy seizes the opportunity during this time of social distancing and forced isolation to encourage connectivity and inclusiveness with a singular focus on engaging educational experiences.

About Harrisburg Academy

Established in 1784, Harrisburg Academy is the 17th oldest non-public school in the nation and Harrisburg's only independent school. Our coed, diverse school community inspires students from age three through 12th grade by providing an academically challenging and globally minded liberal arts education focused on dynamic classroom experiences, strong student outcomes, and a commitment to character development. The Academy proudly stands as the first school in the greater Harrisburg area to offer the International Baccalaureate Diploma program and merit scholarship.

For more information about Harrisburg Academy's Distance Learning Plan, please visit our website or contact Andrianna Dowell via email at communications@harrisburgacademy.org.

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